

had to believe what she thought was a human wish and therefore discounted it. But G-d demanded from her, as He does from each of us, that we pay proper attention to what other humans say to us. Perhaps in their statements and words we can realize that G-d Himself, so to speak, is talking to us.

G-d has many messengers and many ways of reaching us individually but we must be attuned to hear the messages that emanate from Heaven. They should never be allowed to fall on deaf or inattentive ears and minds. To a great extent this ability to listen to the otherwise unheard voice of Heaven is the measure of a Jew and of his ability to accomplish in life. Eventually Sarah hears and believes - and through this Yitzchak is born and Jewish continuity is assured and protected. *Rabbi Berel Wein and torah.org.*

## Haftarah Summary Rabbi Aron Tendler

Sometime around the year 3043 - 705 bce, Elisha took over the mantle of prophecy from Eliyahu. Elisha served the Jewish people as their mentor and protector, and this week's Haftarah relates two of the miraculous incidents that he performed. The first story is of Ovadya's widow and the pitcher of oil that continued to pour until she had enough oil to pay off all her debts and make a decent living.

The second is the Shunamis who was unable to conceive children. After being blessed with a son, the child dies and Elisha performs the miracle of resurrecting the boy's life. In both instances, basic human needs were satisfied through the righteous individuals trust in the Navi and in Hashem's providence. The widow's husband was the great Ovadya who risked his own life and fortune to protect 100 prophets from the murderous purge of Achav and

## Minyan Schedule

Erev Shabbat Parashat Vayera  
Kabbalat Shabbat 6.30 pm  
Candle lighting 30/10/15 7.02 pm

Shabbat Parashat Vayera  
Shacharit 31/10/15 9.15 am  
Children's Service 10.00 am  
Mincha (Mizrachi) 7.00 pm  
Shabbat ends 8.00 pm

Erev Shabbat Parashat Chaye Sarah  
Kabbalat Shabbat 6.30 pm  
Candle lighting 06/11/15 7.09 pm

## Announcements

**Kiddush is sponsored by**

**Eileen Franklin in  
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Ezevel. The Shunamis and her husband were wealthy, G-d fearing people who generously provided for all who needed. Both women could have expected that their basic needs for income and family be deservedly provided by G-d.

The theme of Vayera is trusting Hashem beyond the limits of rational and assumed justice. As with Sarah and Avraham, the trust that Ovadya's widow and the Shunamis had in Hashem was unrelated to their limited human expectations. They trusted Hashem to provide as He saw fit, without any strings attached. *R. Aron Tendler and torah.org.*

# Or Chadash

קהילת אור חדש

## WEEKLY BULLETIN

### Shabbat Parashat Vayera

18 Cheshvan 5776; 31 October, 2015  
**Shabbat Torah reading:** Stone Chumash page 78 , and Haftarah page 1134.

### President Jonathan Erlich

**Rabbi-in-residence** Rabbi Franklin  
**Dvrei Torah** Rabbi Franklin

## Shedding Light on the Akedah

Rabbi Marc D. Angel

The story of the Akedah, the binding of Isaac, is one of the most powerful and enigmatic passages in the Torah. Why did G-d need to test Abraham's faith in such a dramatic fashion? Why did Abraham heed G-d's instruction to sacrifice Isaac without offering any resistance? Why did the angel of the Lord wait until the very last moment, when Abraham had a knife at Isaac's throat, to intervene? Over the centuries, many commentators have offered interpretations of the Akedah story. What follows is my commentary on the Akedah.

G-d commands Abraham: "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you." How would

Abraham have reacted to these words? Here is what he may have been thinking: "Your son, your only son" I have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac is not my "only" son. Yes, I've sent Ishmael away at Sarah's request but he is still my son. "Whom you love" I love Ishmael! I sent him away with great reluctance, but he is my first son; he is stronger than Isaac. I prayed that G-d would accept Ishmael as my heir (Bereishith 17:18). "Isaac," Isaac is a shy, weak boy. How can he possibly be my successor? He doesn't have the strength of character to build a new faith and a new nation.

G-d was not testing Abraham's faith in Him. Rather, He was testing to see if Abraham could open his eyes and realize the virtues of Isaac! Abraham offered no resistance to G-d's command because Abraham did not value Isaac highly. Perhaps this was a way to be rid of Isaac and reclaim Ishmael as his rightful heir.

Abraham and Isaac traveled together for three days before coming to the mountain where



the sacrifice was to take place. G-d apparently wanted Abraham to spend this considerable time with his son to get to know him better, to try to understand his unique nature and spiritual qualities. Yet, Abraham did not get the message; he bound Isaac on the altar, ready to slaughter him. An angel called out from heaven: "Abraham, Abraham. Lay not your hand upon the lad, nor do anything unto him; for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

In the traditional Torah musical notes, there is a "pasek" between the two mentions of Abraham's name. This implies a sharp break between the two. Abraham before the Akedah was radically different from Abraham after the Akedah. Originally, he had not fully understood or appreciated the greatness and value of Isaac. But as he brought a knife to Isaac's throat and was about to lose him forever, suddenly it dawned upon him how terribly he had misjudged Isaac. He now appreciated the precious qualities of Isaac; he now loved Isaac totally.

After this transformation had occurred within Abraham, the angel told Abraham to spare Isaac's life. The angel affirms that G-d knows now that Abraham fears the Lord because Abraham did not "withhold" his son, his only son, from G-d. The Hebrew word for "withhold" is "hasakhta." The root of this word is also the root of the word for darkness, "hoshekh." I believe the verse could be understood as follows: "for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man [and

have come to understand My choice of Isaac as your successor], seeing that [your eyes] are no longer darkened from [realizing the value of] your son, your only [single legitimate heir] son [whom you have received] from me."

Thus, the Akedah story tells how G-d challenged Abraham to open his eyes and to see clearly the virtues of Isaac. The trial served to remove the darkness from Abraham's perception of Isaac, and to enlighten him as to the true greatness of his unique son whom G-d has chosen as his successor. Once Abraham saw the light, which he only did upon contemplating the imminent death of Isaac, then G-d knew that Abraham had learned his lesson properly. The story concludes with Abraham's noticing "a ram caught in a thicket by its horns." Abraham takes this ram and sacrifices it to the Lord in place of sacrificing Isaac.

It can be surmised that the ram had been caught in the thicket throughout this episode, not that it just suddenly turned up in time for Abraham to sacrifice it. The ram had been there all along but Abraham did not see it! He was oblivious to what was right in front of his eyes, to an obvious substitute for Isaac on the altar. Only after the Akedah, when the darkness was removed from Abraham's perceptions, did Abraham become enlightened about the value of Isaac; only then was he able to see the ram to contemplate more clearly the reality around him.

Thus, the Akedah story teaches that we sometimes don't adequately appreciate and value others until we are about to lose them or until we have

indeed lost them forever. If only we had opened our eyes earlier! If only we had taken the time to understand! After such a cathartic experience, our eyes become enlightened, we see more clearly and with better perspective. Hopefully, as in the case of the Akedah, the lesson is learned before the loss of the loved one; often in life, though, it is learned too late when nothing can be done except to mourn.

G-d's challenge to Abraham was a challenge we each face: to think and perceive more lucidly; to value others more sympathetically; not to let our eyes be darkened by egotism or erroneous judgment. We often don't appreciate what we have until we've had to contemplate losing it forever. Then we open our eyes and try to salvage the situation. Or we come to regret our short-sightedness for the rest of our lives. *Rabbi Marc D. Angel and the Institute of Jewish Ideas and Ideals.*

## G-d Sends Messengers to Avraham and Sarah Rabbi Berel Wein

G-d appears to Avraham in the opening verse of this week's parsha. How does G-d appear to him? The rabbis teach us that He appears to him in the form of a visitor there to cheer him in his illness and pain after the rite of circumcision. The Jewish value of visiting and cheering the sick stems from our imitation of this G-dly virtue as first revealed to Avraham. In this instance, G-d reveals Himself to Avraham through three Bedouin Arabs who are apparently searching for a place to rest, eat and drink.

The apparent Arabs are angels and messengers of G-d. It is one of the great attributes of the house of Avraham and Sarah that visitors can enter their home as Arab desert dwellers and leave as angels. It is these wayfarers that deliver

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to Avraham and Sarah the message of continuity and eternity of Jewish life. Sarah will give birth to Yitzchak after decades of being a barren woman.

Earlier, G-d informed Avraham of this momentous news directly. Yet Sarah, the direct recipient of this blessing, He somehow chooses to inform in an indirect manner through the unknown strange visitors that arrive at her tent and that she hospitably feeds. There is a great insight in this chosen method of G-d, so to speak, in delivering the message to Sarah through seemingly human auspices. G-d often, if not constantly in our times, talks to us through seemingly human messengers. If we are able to listen carefully to what others say to us, oftentimes we will hear a divine message communicated to us through a human conduit.

I think that this also explains why Sarah was initially bemused by the words of the angel. She evidently thought that it was just a throw-away promise of a wandering Bedouin Arab and reacted accordingly. At the outset she did not hear the voice of G-d in the words of the angel that addressed her. Therefore she did not take those words seriously. G-d reprimands her for this attitude and asks "Why did Sarah not take these words seriously?" Avraham who heard the tidings from G-d directly realized that the message was true and serious. Sarah

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